They Called Him Raccoon

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MR. LINCOLN CHRISTENS HIS NAMESAKE CITY LINCOLN, ILLINOIS

The Word Abused . . .

THE NATURE OF FAITH

The biblical terms *faith* and *faithful* are generally abused in theological circles, and they are commonly sectarianized, used as they are to preserve some factious notion. It has been so throughout the history of the church, even from the beginning. The blind man healed by Jesus (John 9) was condemned by the Pharisees for believing in the one who had restored his sight. He was no longer faithful once he questioned their authority and their system. They cared more for their orthodoxy than for his well-being. So with the Judaizers who hounded Paul from city to city, for they measured faithfulness in terms of conformity to their legalistic creed, not in terms of trust in a Person.

History is replete with this kind of stuff. The Arian controversy (on the nature of the Trinity) raged for 60 years. It was a question as to whether the Logos, or preexistent Christ, was created by God or eternal with God. It concerned one word, *homoousious,* meaning "same nature." Was Jesus of the same nature with God or not? In 325 A.D. three hundred bishops gathered in Nicaea to settle the matter. They decided that Jesus is "very God of very God" and "consubstantial" with the Father. Anyone who believed otherwise was anathematized. To be "faithful" one had to subscribe to the Nicean Creed.

I was visiting with a brother recently who is an Arian without realizing it. He holds the view that God created only one thing, the Logos, and from that point on the Logos created everything. This would mean that the Word which became flesh was *not* eternal with the Father, but was a created Being. Despite the Nicean edict, I believe the brother is as faithful to Jesus as any of the rest of us, for faith is not a matter of doctrinal exactitude.

That is our thesis in this installment: *faith is not doctrinal but personal.* But the church through the ages has been all too slow to learn this lesson, and so she has persecuted her own sons, sometimes burning them at the stake, for some doctrinal aberration, when in fact they might well have been among the most faithful saints Calvin burned Servetus at the stake in 1553 in Geneva as a "heretic," for he did not believe in infant baptism or predestination and *did* believe in premillennialism. He cried out from the flames, "O Jesus, thou Son of the eternal God, have pity on me." Even his dying prayer was doctrinally suspect since it was not soundly Trinitarian, but his personal faith in Jesus may have been as high as the sky and as deep as the ocean.

Conversion throughout the ages has been made more doctrinal than personal. A Roman Catholic is considered "converted" if he begins to believe like a Protestant and vice-versa, but not if one simply comes to a deeper conviction of Jesus as the Lord of his life. A Baptist considers you "converted" – *really* converted – when you go over to his side. To become a Mormon one must believe the Joseph Smith story, and it really isn't all that important as to how devoted one may be to Jesus. To "convert to

Jehovah's Witnesses" doesn't mean that one has been touched by the gospel story and that Jesus has changed his life, but that he has embraced a particular brand of doctrines.

On and on it goes. We are judged more by what doctrines we hold to than by the hold we have on Jesus. One is not "faithful" unless he is acappella or non-class or amillennial or non-cooperative or direct support. A congregation is not of "the faith" unless it serves the Supper in a certain manner or restricts its budget to non-institutional programs. "Obedience to the faith," a beautiful scriptural concept, is made to apply to every opinion imaginable, and if one does not kow-tow to a particular opinion, held to so dearly by the party, he is branded as *unfaithful.* And so we "convert" each other to our own sects, announcing to the world that someone has found "the faith" and is no longer in error. This usually has little to do with a person's relationship to Jesus as Lord. If one leaves us, we presume that he has "departed from the faith," when in fact he just might leave us for the sake of the faith.

This brutalization of a scriptural concept is frequently evident within congregations, in the way a preacher, elder or member is treated when he dares to veer from the party line. He may do no more than to attend "denominational" services or express doubts about our position on instrumental music (*Can we be sure that it is a sin?*, he innocently asks), but he is nonetheless treated as one who has lost the faith. He is sometimes "withdrawn from," as if he had become an infidel or a heretic, when in fact he may be growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord more than at anytime in his life. It may be a "charismatic" brother that gets the treatment, one who has really found Jesus at a level he did not know existed. As often as not we drive such ones from us in one way or another, as if the Body cannot bear such diversity. We must "preserve the faith," say our leaders, and we often resort to underhanded tactics in doing so. It does not occur to us that kindness, gentleness, sensitivity, veracity, and justice may be as much related to being *faithful* as is one's position on the workings of the Holy Spirit. Now really, does it make any sense at all, for a Church of Christ (*of Christ,* mind you) to "withdraw" from the very ones who are most endeavoring to be like Jesus?

How long can we go on penalizing our brothers and sisters for thinking, impugning their motives for asking questions, rejecting them for seeing things differently, suspecting them for their new experiences?

Many of us are sick and tired of such insipid sectarianism, and we insist that it is high time for all such nonsense to cease. This business of reducing "the faith once for all delivered" to the narrow confines of childish partyism should no longer be tolerated. We must come to realize that we ourselves will be judged by that judgment whereby we are judging each other. If you do not want your faithfulness to be determined by opinionism, then you must not impose your opinions upon others, measuring *their* faith by what you see as necessary for yourself.

Faith is a simple and loving trust in Jesus as Lord. It means to love him and to seek to conform one's life after his purity and holiness. Being truly faithful means to love Jesus with

all one's personaltiy. One with this kind of faith may be wrong about various points of doctrine. He is right about Jesus, and that is the point of faith. Faith is therefore centered in a Person, not doctrinal tenets, whether Thomism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, or Campbellism. One may be burdened with Calvinistic errors, but still very much alive in his faith in Jesus. One is "unfaithful" only when he knowingly neglects or repudiates the will of Christ in his life.

Faith comes from belief in testimony of what God has done through Christ. This is the gospel. When men share this precious faith that *Jesus is Lord*, they are in fellowship with each other because they are in Christ together. Doctrine (the apostles' teaching) is something basically different and is not necessarily related to the gospel of *the faith*. Doctrine deepens and strengthens faith, but it does not create it. Only the gospel does that. The faith that saves is the faith that believes and obeys *the gospel*. This is Paul's point in I Cor. 4:15: "Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel" The various guardians will doubtless differ in their teaching, and so there will almost surely be some errors in our doctrinal understanding. But it is the gospel that gave us faith and made us sons of God.

The scriptures make it clear that we are justified by faith. Rom. 5:1 puts it: "Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We should never tire of Eph. 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith." Gal. 3:26 says we are all "sons of God through faith," and goes on to show how this faith expresses itself in baptism. So does Mk. 16:16: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

While such saving faith begins in the assent to the facts of the gospel – in believing that Jesus is the son of God – it goes on beyond that. It reaches beyond the intellect to man's heart and becomes trust. This is the quiet assurance that Jesus is Lord and that he will really do all that he promises. In Acts 2 Peter is insistent that God has made Jesus *both* Lord and Christ. An intellectual faith may acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, but it is trust that enthrones him as the Lord of one's heart. This is what it means to be faithful or full of faith.

This is dramatically set forth in John 6, the only place in scripture where we have many of Jesus' disciples turning away and following him no more. They turned away when he attempted to move them from an intellectual faith to a childlike trust. They believed he was the Christ, but faltered when he taught: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." He is the bread come down out of heaven, he told them, and "he who eats this bread will live for ever." To them this was a hard saying, and so they turned away, many of them, leaving him with the twelve. To them he said: "Will you also go away?" It was Peter who said: "Lord, to whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life."

This is trust, not mere acceptance of certain facts. Peter saw Jesus as the bread of heaven, the only one who has the words of eternal life. That is what eating his flesh and drinking his blood

has reference to, not to the Lord's Supper. Jesus is life itself and the only source of all life. He is heaven's bread to man. One must therefore cleave to him as a hungry man holds on to bread. Most of his disciples were unwilling to commit both mind and heart to him, and so they rejected the concept of lordship. They turned away, while Peter stayed at his side. The beloved fisherman realized there was heavenly bread nowhere else. He implicitly trusted his Master, accepting whatever he taught without question.

This is the nature of faith. It is rooted in a Person, the one who is the bread come down out of heaven. It is not loyalty to any doctrinal system, however praiseworthy be that system. It is a mark of sectarianism to regard faith as assent to a particular set of tenets. Our *faithful* brothers and sisters are all those everywhere who are in Christ Jesus, implicitly trusting in him as the Lord of their lives. – *the Editor*

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"

Only recently have I been made aware of the seriousness of this abuse of scripture. I had noticed that Alexander Campbell was insistent that it should be *into* and not *in*, and that he would refer to it now and again, but it was not until I read his "A Pure Version of the Scriptures" in the 1852 *Millennial Harbinger* that I saw he was not simply being cranky.

The above phrase does not in fact appear in all of scripture. Jesus did not say that his disciples were to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," even if most all the versions render it this way. Among those that I consulted only the *New International Version* gives *into* even as a marginal reading. Campbell's *Living Oracles*, of course, goes all the way: "immersing them into the name of the Father, etc." The Greek preposition is *eis* and not *en*, so it should be translated *into* and not *in*.

So it is with other like passages:

Acts 8:16: "they had simply been baptized *eis* (into) the name of the Lord Jesus."

Acts 19:5: "On hearing this, they were baptized *eis* (into) the name of the Lord Jesus."

Rom. 6:3: "all of us who were baptized *eis* (into) Christ Jesus"

1 Cor. 1:13: "Were you baptized *eis* (into) the name of Paul?"

1 Cor. 10:2: "They were all baptized *eis* (into) Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

Gal. 3:27: "As many of you as were baptized *eis* (into) Christ have put Christ on."

Mt. 28:19 is exactly the same way: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *eis* (into) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Never in scripture is one baptized *in* (en) the name of either the Father or the Son, and never is there any reference to "in the name of the Holy Spirit" in any connection. That phrase *in the name* refers to authority, and while it is frequently used of God and Christ, it is never used of the Spirit. God is of course the essence of authority, and He gave authority to His Son, but there is no such assignment of authority to the Spirit.

But there is no reference to authority in Mt. 28:19. Jesus is not telling

his disciples to baptize "in the name" or *by the authority* of anyone, but to baptize *into* a relationship. We are immersed into the dominion or reign or relationship with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Campbell complained that this was the work of the Roman Catholic Church, "fascinated with the charms of authority," as they are. They want to do everything, from weddings and funerals to christening and extreme unction, "in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," as if God has assigned them such prerogatives. It is made to mean "By the authority of the Trinity" I am doing such and such. Campbell insists that this is a gross abuse of this scripture, that Jesus meant no such thing.

But our own baptists do the same thing (as I myself have done in the past!). They raise a hand heavenward and say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission of your sins. Amen." But that is wrong, and I shall never do so again. Jesus tells us to baptize *into* the name. The difference is important. The point is that we are immersing people into a communion with God, with Christ, with the Holy Spirit. It is not that we are baptizing by heaven's authority. We may be doing that, well enough, but that is not what Jesus is saying.

Campbell suggests that if the baptist wants to say something (he does not of course have to *say* anything!), he could very properly use this formula:

In the name of the Lord (that is by his authority) *I baptize or immerse you into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*

Campbell adds: "But no man, with the knowledge of the Greek New Testament and of the English language, in his understanding, can say, 'I baptize you *in* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' It is impossible. The reason of this is sublimely beautiful and interesting."

This does not mean that we have to be immersed all over again, making sure this time that the right words are said. You *were* baptized *into* the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whether you realized it or not, if you truly believed, just as you were baptized for the remission of sins – regardless of what was said or not said. Thank God that our relationship to Him is not based upon what some preacher says or thinks, or doesn't say or think. God puts it altogether in spite of how fouled up the baptist may be.

The point Campbell was making, which we vigorously repeat, is that we should seek to understand and practice precisely what the scriptures teach, and to avoid those abuses that have been passed along to us by those who should have known better. – *the Editor*

I do not know a single religious party that is content to preach the simple primitive gospel as the apostles preached it. Each one modifies it so as to connect it with some religious theory. Each one demands, in addition to the simple faith demanded by the apostles, the acceptance of various tenents and tests of orthodoxy. –*Robert Richardson, Mill. Harb. 1856*

Bicentennial Notes on Restoration History . . .

THEY CALLED HIM RACCOON

We have learned in our study thus far that the Restoration Movement drew its impetus from reformatory efforts among the Baptists, especially from the Mahoning Association in the Western Reserve, which was finally dissolved in 1830, becoming what came to be known variously as Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ. At the same time however the "Campbellites" and "Stoneites" were having considerable influence in Kentucky, and again it was among the Baptists in particular. There were many noble souls who were responsible for Kentucky becoming the most important state in the Movement in the early decades. One of these was John Smith, a simple name for a simple man – *simple* in that he was cut from common cloth. Of course he had to be nicknamed *Raccoon.*

He must have looked every bit that way, the Daniel Boone type, a man on a rugged frontier with a Raccoon cap. His extraordinary natural talents were matched only by his wit and a gift for repartee. He was known for his sagacity, largeness of heart, and keen insight. More than all this was his devotion to truth and his burning desire to understand the scriptures. While a Calvinistic Baptist, he was never quite satisfied with the answers passed along to him. Uneducated and even illiterate in early manhood, he had to scrounge for enough learning to be able to read. Once he learned his letters, his appetite was insatiable. He not only read everything he could get his hands on, but he dared to think and to question. One day there came into his hands a new journal from Virginia, the *Christian Baptist,* edited by an unknown, one Alexander Campbell. From that moment on life was never the same for Raccoon John Smith.

He was known around the state for his witty replies, and any account of him that takes no note of these would be inadequate. A favorite is the one about some city boys who were poking fun at him at the way he looked, making his way along a dusty road. "He must be Abraham," gibed one of them. "Or Isaac," said another. "No, I think he must be Jacob," scoffed the third one. "Boys, you're all wrong, for I am neither Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob," said Raccoon with that wry smile of his. "I am Saul, the son of Kish, in search of his father's asses, and I am surprised to find them so soon!"

Sitting in the town pub with other preachers around steins of beer, the Methodist divine supposed he should thank God for his blessing. As he prayed, Raccoon drained his mug and then had time to empty the divine's as well, but unbeknownst to him since he was praying not only with resonant voice but with closed eyes. Surprised to see his beer gone, Raccoon jovially admonished him: "Reverend, the good Book says not only to pray, but to *watch* and pray!"

Upon witnessing a Methodist preacher sprinkle an unwilling subject, a kicking and screaming baby, Raccoon resolved to get back at him if ever he had opportunity. One day this preacher

was standing by, watching brother Smith immerse believers in a river, as strange as it was to his eyes. Suddenly he lays hold of the preacher, forcing him toward the river, avowing that he was going to immerse him. Vehemently protesting, the preacher insisted that he did not want to be immersed, that it would do him no good if it were against his will. "I watched you baptize that baby against its will,' Raccoon argued, "and do you think it did it any good?" The preacher, barely missing a ducking, must have caught the point.

That was Raccoon John Smith. To know him was to love him, even when he taunted you with his repartee. Perhaps it was his transparency that attracted people to him. They could see that he was critical of himself and made no boastful claims to inerrancy. A year or so before he met Campbell he was giving a fervent exhortation when he was struck with the inconsistencies of his Calvinistic position. Stopping suddenly in his discourse, he cried out to the surprise of his audience: "Something is wrong among us, but how to get it right I know not."

He hardly knew what to think of what he read in Campbell's journal, but he was eager to hear the man on his visit to Kentucky the next year (1824), which was Campbell's first of many trips to that state. Upon meeting him for the first time, in a private home prior to preaching, he states that his curiosity about the man was so intense that he simply wanted to sit and look at him for an hour. Once he heard him preach, he expressed disappointment that he had travelled so far by horseback to hear a man speak but 30 minutes. He was urged to consult his watch. "On looking, I found it had been two hours and thirty minutes, and simply said, 'Two hours of my time are gone and I know not how, though wide awake' ".

Campbell had taught on the place of the covenants in Gal. 4, drawing upon Paul's allegory of Sarah and Hagar, which continued to be one of his favorite themes for a lifetime. Someone asked brother Smith what he now thought of the controversial Campbell. "Be he devil or saint, he has thrown more light on that epistle and the whole Scriptures than I have heard in all the sermons I ever listened to before." It was a new beginning for John Smith. He soon found himself to be one of the reforming Baptists of Kentucky. He became a moulder of a Movement.

Life had been rough for John up to this point. Born in poverty to a pioneer family in east Tennessee in 1784, his years were marked by illness and tragedy. He took his young bride, Anna Townsend, into the wilds of Wayne County, Kentucky, where he preached as he could while eking out a meager existence from the soil. He moved to Alabama, hoping to escape poverty. Here he had visions of being a plantation owner, with slaves and all, even if it meant no more preaching. But tragedy struck again and again in quick succession, redirecting his life. A vicious fire destroyed his log cabin home, and two of his children were burned to death. His wife never recovered from the tragedy and died soon afterward. He himself came down with the dreaded "cold plague" and lingered for months between life and death. Once he recovered, he supposed the Lord was chastening him because he desired to quit preaching for the

sake of gain. He returned to Kentucky a humbler and sadder man. He began to preach with power and persuasion, and he was soon in great demand among the Baptists. In the meantime he married Nancy Hurt, who was to be his wife for half a century.

Once Campbell's influence had the effect of freeing him from Calvinistic sectarianism, it became more and more evident to his Baptist brethren that a change had been wrought in his life. His goal was now to restore the ancient gospel, but this was not without opposition. His associates figured that he would soon disassociate himself from the Baptists, and many of them supposed it would be a good riddance. But he wouldn't leave them, insisting that he loved them too much for that. When an impatient Calvinist insisted that he should quietly go and leave them alone, Raccoon told of how his brother tried in vain to swap horses with an Irishman. Declining the deal, the Irishman said, "It would be a pity, Mr. Smith, to part you and your horse, for you think so very much of him!" Raccoon assured his Calvinistic brother that it was that way with the Baptists and himself: "We love you too well to give you up!"

This was the common attitude of our people in those early days. They were resolved to work among the existing denominations of which they were a part, reformers though they were. They never did really separate, not in the main, but were eventually excluded by the mainline churches. This happened to Raccoon, more or less, for he was strongly opposed by *status quo* Baptists. Meetinghouses were locked against him; he was scandalized as a divider of churches and even as a hog thief. But many Baptists became "Reformers" or "Campbellites," sometimes entire congregations. When a minority of Baptists held on to the building, the majority would leave and start a "church of Christ" somewhere in the area. Soon Raccoon was the acknowledged leader of the reformation in Kentucky. The cause spread like a prairie fire. It was not unusual for Raccoon to immerse 30 or 40 in a single day. One report on a few months in 1828 referred to 800 immersions.

The separation from the Baptists was at last tragically solidified, though Raccoon always spoke in terms of desiring fellowship with Christians of all denominations. Now that the Disciples were on their own and no longer thought of in terms of "Reformed Baptists," they began more and more to come upon the "Christians" of the Barton W. Stone movement. The Stone reformation had begun in Cane Ridge, in the same state, the same year that Raccoon was immersed, 25 years earlier in 1804. It was sometimes referred to as the "Christian Connection" and had gained a wide following throughout Kentucky, with upwards of 10,000 members.

John devoted himself to the task of uniting the Reformers and the Christians, which was finally affected in 1831 in Lexington, Kentucky, which stands out as one of the great moments in our history. This could never have been but for the small unity gatherings held here and there in the area of Georgetown, led by John Smith and John T. Johnson of the Disciples and Barton W. Stone and John Rogers of the Christians. There was much opposition to such a union – both ways – because of the differences between them. That such a union was achieved is one of the great stories in American church history.

It is even more significant that it lasted, going on to become the great force it has been in this country and around the world.

This was achieved because of the faith and dedication of a few concerned people, John Smith being one of them. It was he, at that momentous gathering in Lexington, that spoke those oft-repeated words: "Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us all come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need."

Once the peace was made it was something else to keep it. The two groups, now one Movement for the unity of all believers, selected Raccoon and John Rogers to go out among the churches and solidify the union. Since the Disciples were especially reluctant to accept the Stone brethren, Raccoon prepared an *Address to the Brethren* in which he sought to dispel their fears and to show them that unity in Jesus does not necessitate exact doctrinal conformity. This *Address* is a precious document in our history, one too long neglected. He makes these points in particular: (1) We have no right to reject as brothers those who believe and obey Jesus just as we have; (2) We should allow to others that which we claim for ourselves, the right of private judgment; (3) We can break bread with other believers without sanctioning any sectarian peculiarities they may have; (4) In receiving brethren into the fellowship of our congregations we are to require only what was required by the apostles; (5) The union between Reformers and Christians does not mean that we wish to join the immersed and unimmersed in the congregation of Christ, for it was not so in the primitive church.

Raccoon John Smith labored on for almost 40 years, living to the ripe old age of 84, surviving Campbell by two years. Much of his time was spent in the Kentucky back country where he had preached Calvinism in his youth. He was resolved to undo that by preaching the ancient gospel to the same people. He immersed many thousands and planted hundreds of congregations, and his constant plea was the unity of believers on the basis of the one faith, despite a hundred opinions. He went home from Mexico, Missouri, to join that glorious host, which in this case ought to be as good as anywhere in Texas. Among his last words were these, which reflect the way he had lived: "What a great failure, after all, would my long and checkered life have been but for this glorious hope of a hereafter."

– the Editor

In Christian Baptism there is more than water and words, and the action of immersion. There is a grace, a special grace. Baptism is valid grace, and no more. *–Alexander Campbell, Mill. Harb., 1854, p. 124.*

TRAGEDY IN CALIFORNIA AND ELSEWHERE

It has been a phenomenal news story, making the front pages of Los Angeles newspapers as well as a two-column spread in *Newsweek*, including a picture of the principal character. It has special interest for Churches of Christ since it concerns their most illustrious son, the man who occupies and has long occupied the most eminent positions the church has to offer.

The story has all the ingredients of raw drama. A fiery crash on a coastal highway. Two aged women burned to death, and the daughter of one of them injured. The man arrested for drunken driving was a renowned Church of Christ minister and the chancellor of its only university, as well as a director of Lockheed Aircraft. He later pleaded guilty to manslaughter and was fined and sentenced, but under conditions that preempt a prison term.

The writeup in *Newsweek* underscored the raw edges of the tragedy, revealing that the minister had perviously been arrested on a D.W.I., which made his conduct appear all the more inexcuseable. It also pointed to the plight of the judge, who finally passed sentence after a long delay, noting that he was forced by public pressure to make a statement explaining why his judgment was lenient. Said *Newsweek:* "Predictably, this gingerly treatment of a prominent personality has fueled a fresh debate over a historic legal dilemma; should the punishment fit the crime or should it fit the criminal?" It further related that the daughter of one of the victims was displeased with the judge's decision and that she and her husband have filed a lawsuit for civil damages against the minister. Then there was his picture, walking away from the court with a devoted daughter at his side. The judge had described him as "intelligent, sensitive and compassionate." It is all a very sad affair.

But all this, calamitous as it is, may not reveal the deeper dimensions of the tragedy, which reach far beyond California. The *Newsweek* reporters learned that our brother was having doubts about his religion even before the accident. Conflicts and infighting at the university had shaken his confidence. He told the judge: "For years it has been increasingly difficult for me to accept the simplistic assumptions of the hell-fire and brimstone fundamentalism which most preachers in this church teach." Then came two heart attacks and two minor strokes. Amidst all this trauma he turned to drink, having been an abstainer all his life. It must have been a heart-rending scene, our brother standing there before the university chapel, broken and remorseful, asking for forgiveness. *Newsweek* says the students sobbed and that Pat Boone wrote a letter to the judge, pleading for leniency. Now that he knows Jesus, Pat treats us as he would like to be treated, not the way we have treated him.

I have followed this sad story from the beginning, and while many of our papers have editorialized about it in one way or another, I have purposely withheld any comment until now. Receiving word of it from California only hours after it happened last September, I wrote to our brother of my love and concern. And I am praying that he will find healing amongst all the suffering. Our Father can and will minister to us in tragedy, and He can use suffering to make us more like Himself

than ever before. This is what I want for our brother, as I wrote to him, even if it means starting all over in some humble ministry. In terms of eternity such sufferings can prove to be a blessing, certainly if in it all we turn out to be more like Jesus because of them.

I am, however, convinced that our people do not discern the true character of this tragedy – a tragedy that expresses itself in far subtler ways than highway accidents. Our people are victimized by a cruel and oppressive System that strips them of authentic individuality. They come to behave like robots rather than as men of integrity. One person, rather close to the California situation and one who loves and respects our troubled brother, summed it up poignantly: "His problem is that he has been leading a double life, really believing one way but having to practice something else." He said as much to the judge. What a pity! And yet it is good, well-meaning men who become trapped by this religious austerity.

Before we become judgmental towards our brother and take pride in our own goodness (Are we tempted to find satisfaction in the ruin of others?), we would do well to take stock of ourselves and see if the "double life" syndrome is not evident all about us. It may not always lead to drink, but it is always tragic when a person's profession is less than genuine. We have many a preacher who manages to appear "kosher" in the pulpit, while in his heart of hearts he'd like to dump the System and be a free man in Jesus. In his own conscience he errs in what he does *not* say that he believes he should say. College teachers among us soon learn to "take it easy" and not offend the party line, even if it means shortchanging the students in their education.

It filters down to the rank and file, with many of our members "going along" out of habit, or simply taking the course of least resistance, when in fact they buy but little of what they are subjected to. I've had brethren to say to me, once liberated from our exclusivistic, sectarian shell: "I never believed all that stuff anyhow!" Many more would like to make the break, but everybody is waiting for the rest of them! Many preachers would delight in being really free in the pulpit, but they are all waiting for a more seasonable time. Many, many there are who really believe in the ideals and principles set forth in this journal, that I know, but they dare not reveal it. Now, really, is that so different from the tragedy in California, in terms of *cause*, that is, if not in consequence?

Recently I sat in on a rap session of a gang of our kids from Abilene. An older brother, noting their fresh candor in free worship, confided in me, "These kids, once they're running the churches, are not going to put up with all this nonsense that we've put up with." Right! But what the brother did not realize is that many of the older ones do not really believe it either, including a lot of the preachers and elders, The young people are simply more honest than the rest of us. And a phony religion carried on by phony people is tragic, whether they turn to drink or not. They may not kill people on the highways, but what is their contribution in terms of conforming to the likeness of Jesus rather than to a party?

In God's eyes there may be little difference between big tragedies and little ones. Rudeness may be as of-

fensive as smashing someone's automobile. Insensitivity may be as serious as a D.W.I. charge. A ruined reputation or a personal insult may be as bad as causing someone to burn to death. It certainly hurts a lot longer, even if not as intensely. Turning a cold shoulder to our divorcees, excluding our charismatics, branding our "liberals," and firing those that do not say things just right may call for as many tears in heaven's sight as anything drunken drivers ever do. How many sobbed over the way the Church of Christ treated Pat Boone, and his parents, and his sister, all among the sweetest and dearest people the church ever had? No confessions appeared in the *Firm Foundation.* Few, if any, letters were written in their behalf. What we do in the name of "doctrinal purity" may be more hideous in God's sight than scorched blood on a blackened highway.

Our colleges seem to be the worst offenders in all this game playing, perhaps because they suppose they have more to lose if something happens to the System. It is evident in these lesser tragedies that I am always hearing about, and always from good authority. There is this good brother now serving on the faculty of one of our Texas state universities, but who previously taught at ACC (now ACU!), who was invited to participate on the program of the recent lectureship. The professor was previously an elder in a congregation from which he and more than 100 others, including other elders and deacons, left for the sake of freedom. He warned the brother from ACC who invited him that there might be some flak if he appeared on the program, in view of these recent developments, in his home congregation. The ACC man assured him that there would be no problem, so our brother was added to the program and made his plans accordingly.

Once the program was made public, a young preacher in this town fires a letter to the ACC officials, threatening exposure if the professor is not removed from the lectureship program, all of course in the name of sound doctrine, Phone calls were made, conferences were held, strategy was determined. Big deal! Finally the prof gets that inevitable call to discuss the problem. He immediatley settled it with an "I'll get you off the hook" acquiescence, and so his name was deleted and the *status quo* was maintained. And this brother had himself served on the Abilene faculty, is highly respected, and has the finest relationship with all concerned. His years of service at less than standard wages, his contributions to ACC in time and money since leaving the school, his exemplary life and professional reputation meant nothing in the face of a threat from a keeper of the System.

As I heard this story, one fact emerged that is strongly reflective of the tragedy in California. All those at ACC involved in handing this good brother, honored at his own university, a professional and personal insult *did not want to do it and did not really believe they should do it.* They knew the man, loved the man, respected the man, and wanted him on the program – and they knew that "it was because of envy that they had delivered him up" – but still they yielded, violating their own sense of what is right for the sake of the System. That kind of double-dealing and double-living makes tragedies of us all.

It is enough to make a man take to drink. I think I'll close this piece and take one myself! – *the Editor*

LIFE IN OUR FIRST MEETINGHOUSE

W. Carl Ketcherside

It makes a difference when a congregation gets a meetinghouse of its own. There are some things about it that are good, and there are others that are not. The plan to purchase the old saloon building and move it to a new location worked like a charm. Even though it was before the days of chain saws, the men cut it in two and then fitted it back together on the lot which was a few hundred feet from the location of the Baptist building. To make it look more like a "church building," a bell-tower was erected on the front which never housed a bell. It was a luxury which could not be afforded.

The very first meeting in the new location was noticeably different. It was more formal and "churchy." We had been meeting in the grove on good days, and in the little living-room in our grandfather's home on cold and rainy days. The grove was the best place. Sometimes while we were singing grandfather's favorite song, "My latest sun is sinking fast, my race is nearly run," you could look up at the fleecy white clouds and imagine that they were "the angel band" ready to bear you away on their snowy wings to your immortal home. Occasionally, one of the dogs would chase a squirrel right down among the benches and up a hickory tree behind the Lord's Table. There is only one other thing on earth that can equal a dog in enlivening an open air meeting, and that is a three foot blacksnake.

Even on bad days it always was interesting. The children sat on the old rag carpet which "Aunt Peggy" had made on a loom. If they got tired they could stretch out and take a nap and no one cared. Aunt Peggy was a half-Cherokee Indian who had befriended our grandmother when she was an orphan girl and later on came to live with my grandparents. The deep wrinkles in her brown face bore mute testimony to a life of toil and privation. Aunt Peggy didn't "go to church" but when the church came to her on rainy days she did not budge from her splint-bottom chair in front of the fireplace. She smoked a little clay pipe "during meeting" the same as at any other time, and it was interesting to see her make a "V" out of her fingers and put them to her mouth and spit. She never missed, and if a stray fly was unfortunate enough to walk in to range along the hearth, she neatly picked him off with an amber jet, regardless of what the worshipers around her were doing at the moment. I remember that during prayer we children always kept one eye closed for God's sake, and the other one open and focused on Aunt Peggy who seemed almost as old and even more interesting to us than God at the time.

When we moved into the "church building" we children felt "boxed in" and things might have seemed very dry if it had not been for our grandfather who sometimes enlivened the scene because he was so deadly serious about everything that pertained to God. He had been crippled by a premature blast underground which had injured his spine when rocks rained

down upon him, and although he surprised the company doctors after they had predicted his death, he was doomed to walk quite stooped and bent over the remainder of his life. The company gave him token employment in the warehouse where one of his tasks was to reduce the rodent population. One Wednesday he moved sacks of cattle feed and boxes of other commodities all day long and killed whatever rats he could with a long stick.

The old man was dog-tired when he came to meeting and almost as soon as he sat down in the corner of the front seat he fell into a deep sleep. It was while our uncle L.E. was on the platform that grandfather suddenly jumped to his feet and began poking under the seats and flailing about with his cane while shouting, "Get him! Get him! There he goes! Hit him! Hit him!". Uncle L.E. called out to him but he did not hear. He was having a "rat-killing" good time in his sleep and took a healthy swipe at our bare feet which we hastily drew up in the seat. After my father had captured him and shaken him back to the world of reality and sat him down in his accustomed place, the proceedings seemed quite dull by comparison and we watched him anxiously, hoping he would fall asleep again. But he did not and the fun was over for that night.

Even when he was awake our grandfather often got things gloriously mixed up or said them backwards. It was the idea of L.E. that the whole congregation should be taught the whole word, and to achieve this objective he would read and explain a chapter while the audience followed along with open Bibles. Of course our grandfather could not read, but he always listened intently with his hand cupped behind his ear. Once when the subject-matter was Judges 15, which records how Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, L.E. finished the text and asked that the books be closed while he questioned the hearers. When he got to my grandfather, he asked, "Pap, can you tell me how Samson slew the thousand men?" The old man was happy that he knew the answer. "He hit 'em over the ass with a jawbone, son, yes sir, that's the way he killed the whole passel of 'em," was the reply.

I could write all day and not exhaust the fascinating things that took place in this little gathering of humble and sincere people, but I must not tarry that long. Even the lives of we children were changed by the religious emphasis which now involved us seven days a week. We turned from playing house or store to "playing church." Each morning we saved the left-over biscuits which were generally thrown over the fence to the pig, and these, together with a glass of water formed the emblems of our memorial service. The grape arbor was our "church house" and the congregation consisted of my younger brother and sister, two dolls (one of which was losing sawdust from a gaping wound in the lower abdomen), and myself. Our pup came to the first service, lying on the ground with his head between his paws, and seemingly enjoying it. But after we baptized him in the galvanized tub under the rain spout he forsook the church and returned to the world. Our father told us not to feel badly about it because the Bible said, "Without are dogs."

Our meetings were held every thirty minutes and began with snatches of songs sung from imaginary books

and led by my little brother. Sometimes he forgot the words and would have to improvise but that did not matter. We made a joyful noise unto the Lord. I was the preacher and I laid it on loud and heavy with such phrases as I could recall, and when I ran out of the remembered phrases, pounding the box in front of me and exhorting the two dolls to repent and be baptized. Regardless of their repentance they were baptized several times daily, while we stood around the tub and sang, "O happy day that fixed my choice." The neighbor children next door watched through the fence, feeling left out and not knowing what we were doing. With their father in the "state pen" they had never seen a religious gathering.

The acquisition of "our own place of worship" as folks phrased it, made it possible for us to have "protracted meetings", and start seriously to separate the chaff from the grain in the village, so that the chaff could be burned with unquenchable fire, while we stood by and watched from the golden portals. The first "evangelist" I ever heard was Daniel Sommer. He was booked for a meeting at Flat River and the brethren there "loaned him" to Cantwell to help our little group "get started off on the right foot." He was an imposing figure, sixty-five years old, and priding himself upon his physical strength and endurance. He wore a knee-length double-breasted alpaca clerical-style coat, and when he took his stand on the platform he thrust his right foot forward and placed his hand in the front of his coat in a Napoleonic pose and his voice boomed out with authority.

Although I was but a mere lad when I first heard him I can recall lying on the grass under the shade of a tree and listening to him as he talked to men during the daytime. He felt he had saved the church from complete apostasy by reading his composition "An Address and Declaration" at Sand Creek, a rural congregation near Windsor, Illinois. In it he called for withdrawal from those who endorsed and condoned the church holding festivals to raise money, select choirs to do the singing, man-made societies for missionary work, and the one-man imported preacher-pastor system. He could quote from memory his closing sentence, "If they do not turn away from such abominations, we can not and will not regard them as brethren."

The church had split before I came along and instrumental music had received the blame since it was visible to the eye. Now, Brother Sommer was preparing to "arraign the new digressives" on a hundred items. The "new digressives" were those who opposed instrumental music and missionary societies but who were "aping the sects" by creating a salaried ministry, or hireling pastor system. Brother Sommer envisioned the "so-called Christian colleges" as posing the greatest threat to the simple faith. He referred to them as "preacher factories" and warned that they would some day control the church through their alumni groups. One of his favorite words was "arraign" and he seldom finished an article in opposition to someone without formally "arraigning" him for a long list of items.

I suspect it gave us an ego trip to have someone come from as far away as Indiana to speak for us. In a day when a lot of folk had never even been to the county seat, Indiana seem-

ed as far away as the North Pole. When you added to it the fact that the speaker had been to college and was the author of several books as well as being an editor of a religious journal, it was enough to make your head swim. Even the Baptists couldn't top that so they stayed away from our meetings as we did from theirs. They stayed away because they couldn't stand the truth; we stayed away because we couldn't stand to hear error advocated.

The second preacher who came was William Grant Roberts. He had studied to be a debater and had gained a reputation as a "bold challenger of the sects" and as being "rough on rats." Sectarians and rats were in the same category. In every public discourse, Brother Roberts debated with an imaginary adversary, carrying both sides of the controversy. He never lost such a discussion. Secure in the truth and standing firm on the rock he constantly rebuked denominational pastors who were not present for "spewing out their flopdoodle gush" as he referred to false doctrine.

He specialized in debating Mormons and Baptists, but took on anyone, sometimes having to study up to see what some group believed after having signed a proposition. If anyone asked him if he was hesitant about mixing with a formidable opponent, he assured them he would "tack his hide on the barn door with the bloody side out." His debate in Flat River with a Methodist preacher by the name of Mothershead was characterized by such sharpness and sarcasm, that a complete generation had to pass before the hostility was alleviated. We won the debate and lost the world!

DOWN HOME with Carl

On May 1, Nell sent out the 285th free copy of my book *The Parable of Telstar and Other Talks,* to a student at Harding College. There are only 70 copies left and one will be sent to any student enrolled in a college or university, upon request, and without charge. The book must be personally requested and the student must give the name of the college where enrolled. Send to my address at the close of this article . . We appreciate a great deal the many letters received telling us that you enjoy reading the story of my life. It isn't that interesting but it is the only life I have had so there isn't too much of a choice . . . If you can spare $2.50 I wish you would send that amount to T.N. Ratliff, 9729 Calumet Drive, Saint Louis, Missouri 63137, and have him send you the cassette containing my two messages entitled, "What is Faith?" and "What is Justification?" I would like to have you hear them and share them with others who will listen. . The series of articles entitled "The Word Abused" as written by Leroy in each issue of this paper is very important and should be kept for future reference . . I am traveling almost every week, and wherever I go I find men and women who are disillusioned with the legalistic stance into which the congregations have been seduced. That there are hundreds who are starting to think for themselves is apparent from the frantic efforts of self-appointed "brotherhood regulators" who are trying to "hold the line" against defection from the traditions of men which have handicapped

us so seriously. Almost 1800 teen - age young people were present for the age young people were present for the convention held at Columbus, Ohio. It was my privilege to speak twice to the group and we had a great time . . . . . The series of addresses at Mineral Ridge, Ohio, attracted excellent audiences each night with an average of 76 persons present for the morning forum sessions . . There are still copies of our last bound issue of *Mission Messenger* available under the title "One in Christ." This clothbound volume of 192 pages, fully indexed, has a dustjacket containing a picture of Nell and myself. The book is only $3.50 and can be ordered from us at the address below . . . August 6,7 I am scheduled to speak at the Men's Clinic, in Bluefield, West Virginia; August 18-20 I will be with First Christian Church, Burnside, Illinois; September 3-6 I am scheduled at Featherstone Camp, Lakeside, California; September 15 – 17 at Springs Valley Church of Christ, French Lick, Indiana; and September 19 – October 1 at Austin, Minnesota. We hope to see you at one of these places . . . Leroy, it is great of you to allow me this space to tell about what is happening. – *W. Carl Ketcherside, 139 Signal Hill Drive, Saint Louis, Missouri 63121.*

OFFICE NOTES

You are to be advised that the next issue of this journal will be the September number, for we do not publish in July and August. Our policy is to send you 200 pages a year in ten installments. We want you to miss us these summer months, but we also want you to know why, lest you suppose we have forgotten about you. We've planned some interesting stuff for you for the September number. This is a good time to send us some extra names (only 5.00 for five names, and we do the mailing) so they can be processed for our fall mailings.

Ouida is in search of one Clyde O. Goff. If he, or someone who knows him, will send us his address, we'll mail him the book he has coming. Since our mailing list is by zip codes rather than alphabetical, she thumbed through all our plates in search of him. He must have ordered the book from someone else's copy, and his address, if we ever had it, got away from us.

We express appreciation to Ira Rice, Jr., editor of *Contending for the Faith,* for publishing the writeup by W.A. Reed of the *Nashville Tennessean* on Carl Ketcherside's visit to the Belmont Church of Christ in that city. Mr. Reed quotes Carl as saying, "Our relationship to God is on a basis of a covenant which, before Christ, was a covenant of laws but now is a covenant of grace whose only dynamic is love." He further quotes Carl as saying that many Church of Christ folk are coming to see the New Testament as love letters from Jesus rather than a book of laws. That was the heading of the writeup, blazoned across both the *Tennessean* and Ira's paper: "New Testament Regarded as Love Letters from Christ." This is but one instance of many important stories among our folk that Ira passes along to his many readers, this being one of the reasons I praise him up and down the country whenever I am asked about his paper.

We can supply two important paperbacks by Keith Miller: *A Second Touch* and *Habitation of Dragons* at 1.75 each. Ideal to hand to a friend. Kenneth Hamilton, a Canadian theologian, has written a significant new book on *To Turn From Idols* which argues that all idolatry finds its origin "the imaginations of men's hearts." In reading the book you may decide we are all closer to idolatry than we suppose, for he deals with idols in both the world and the church, such as the cult of relevance, the great god of change, and the worship of freedom. 3.95.

For 1.95 we will send you *The Christian Looks At Himself* by Anthony A. Hoekema. It is a heart-searching study of the old and new man in the believer, with chapters on Romans 7, sinless perfection, and the joy of fellowship. For the same price we'll include F.F. Bruce's *The Message of the New Testament,* which is a penetrating statement on what that book is all about. Reading it will give you a sense of victory as a believer. All of Bruce's works are highly worthwhile and this is his newest.

We all agree that faith has its hidden difficulties. Two keen writers have collaborated in unmasking some of these, such as: Does God forgive the kind of sins I've committed, that I've never told anyone? You'll appreciate *Living the Adventure* with Keith Miller and Bruce Larson. 3.95.

We'd be pleased to have you at the July 4 special service at Panther Creek Church of Christ, between Cove and Watson, Oklahoma on highway 4, where I'll be speaking on freedom in Christ. Also at the Campbell Bicentennial Seminar at Bethany College, July 7-9, where I'll discuss the significance of the Campbell travel letters. On the program will also be Robert Fife of Milligan, Bill Humble of Abilene, Earl West of Harding, David Edwin Harrell of Alabama, and Bill Banowsky, Carey Gifford and Richard Hughes of Pepperdine, along with two "secular" profs from Temple and UCLA. Among the hosts at Bethany will be Bill Tucker of TCU, the new president at Bethany College, and Perry Gresham, the former president. Following Bethany I will have appointments in Cleveland and Indianapolis.

We wish for you a beautiful summer. Ouida and I are hoping to find a few weeks to spend at our cabin on Cedar Creek lake in east Texas, where I plan to start writing an extensive book on the history of the Restoration Movement, to be published by College Press. Our target date for completion is April, 1978. You'll be hearing more about this, of course. The thing now is to have a good summer. Take your wife for a walk in the woods. Our next visit will be in the September issue, which will be Vol. 18, No. 7.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

A new congregation has begun in Pflugerville, Texas. Interested people are asked to contact Nelson Page at 251-3314 or Arlis Morgan at 251-4403.

Pioneer Bible Translators is an effort within our own Restoration family to do something about the 2,000 tribes without the scriptures. Young people who have missionary ambitions would do well to investigate PBT. The

contact is David Filbeck, Lincoln Christian College, Lincoln, Il. 62656.

The editor of *First Century Christian* issued an editorial in his April issue on "The Church of Christ Zoo." He concedes that the church does not really have the character of a zoo, but that certain predacious creatures are turning it into one. Every strange animal, buzzard and reptile alike, are being invited into the zoo. The zoo keepers are "the Ketchersides and the Garretts." The keepers open the doors to all the varmints of the religious world. No distinction is made between sheep and goats, and the vulture and the dove perch on the same roost. But at last he identifies the critters that the keepers let in: "the broad fellowship in the church of Christ zoo will include the advocates and users of mechanical instruments of music, and holy-roller pentecostals" as well as rationalists and modernists of the rankest sort. The editor makes no reference to the fact that it is the Lord who is really the keeper of the zoo and that he is the one who determines who is in and who is out. It is our role to accept all those to whom he allows entrance, no more and no less. And, yes, that means that we just mignt be stuck with some strange critters, some with animalistic characteristics, including editors. For my part, I accept those that are in the fellowship, and I do not dictate the bounds of that fellowship.

Larry James, writing in the bulletin of the Carrollton Ave. Church of Christ in New Orleans, sets forth a summary of Thomas Campbell's *Declaration and Address.* One of the points is: "Inferences and deductions cannot be formally bound upon members of the body farther than those members see the connection."

Assuring those concerned that they have no intention of imposing a creed, the San Mateo Church of Christ, 525 S. Bayshore Blvd., San Mateo, Ca., is requiring that those who request their aid in the mission field "to fill out a questionnaire." This is because of present efforts in the brotherhood to be sound in faith and practice. We have not seen the questionnaire, but we wonder how true it remains to the hallmark of our Movement – "No creed but Christ."

Hundreds of our most appreciative readers did not even know that this journal existed until someone sent them a free subscription. Many of these have in turn introduced it to others. Since we look to no sect or party, this is our only way of further exposure. "We want to thank someone for sending the paper to us," is a comment we often receive. This summer is a good time for you to send us a list of names so that we can process them for our first fall issue in September. Only 1.00 per name, a minimum of five, no maximum. We do the mailing. If you wish a bundle to hand out yourself, the price is 20cents per copy per month. We especially want the list number so as to prepare for a fall harvest. Our next issue will be the September number. If you believe in what we are doing, please be diligent in sharing it.